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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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More waterfowl refuges are needed in the southern states if hunters are to realize the full benefit of improvements already effected on the northern breeding grounds of ducks and geese, Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, reported today to Acting Secretary of the Interior Oscar L. Chapman.

While the breeding grounds are in fairly good shape and are sending a good quota of waterfowl south each fall, an acute shortage of "duck hotels" or suitable wintering grounds is fast developing in the south, according to Dr. Gabrielson.

Pointing out that the ducks and geese, after they leave their northern breeding grounds, must run the gantlet of a million and a half hunters all the way from Maine to Washington and from Florida to California, Dr. Gabrielson said that the birds must have some places along their migratory routes where they can find respite from the hunters' guns and must also have suitable places to spend the winter months.

"Sanctuaries spotted strategically along the flight paths are highly important," Dr. Gabrielson said. "These follow, on a national scale, the pattern of every good duck hunting club ever operated. Old-time duck hunters always arranged 'loafing ponds' which were never disturbed, or 'rest days' so that the birds would not be continually harrassed and driven away."

Waterfowl refuges were described by Dr. Gabrielson as an advantage to the hunters as well as to the birds. The good feeding conditions and places to rest not only are essential to the welfare of the waterfowl, but hold the flocks in the vicinity longer so that shooting is improved over a longer period.

During recent years; careful rehabilitation work in the northern states and Canada has repaired much of the damage done by drought and drainage, with the result that thousands of acres are again productive duck breeding grounds. However, improvement of conditions in the southern areas where the waterfowl spend half the year has not kept pace with the rehabilitation work in the north, and Fish and Wildlife Service officials fear that the national waterfowl management program will be thrown out of balance unless more southern refuges are established.

"No Iowa hog or sheep farmer would depend on summer pasture alone; but if he wanted to stay in business more than six months, Dr. Gabrielson said. "Ducks and geese require the same fundamental principles of management."

Some recent additions to the winter refuge maintained by the Fish and Wildlife Service were noted by Dr. Gabrielson: among them some 3,500 acres in two strategic locations in California, and two new refuges in Texas and Oklahoma - one on the northern shores of Lake Texhoma, the other on a southern arm of this large impoundment.

In southeastern Missouri the once-famous fishing and hunting of Mingo Swamp are soon to be restored. Funds derived from the sale of "duck stamps" are now buying the swamp and will finance the construction of dikes across the old drainage ditches to restore the water level. Kentucky Reservoir, constructed by the Tennessee Valley Authority, will yield thousands of acres of new wintering grounds in western Kentucky and Tennessee.

Although these outstanding wintering areas have been added to the Service's refuge system in recent months, "others are needed and must be obtained," Dr. Gabrielson emphasized, "if we are to round out the kind of a program that will insure a perpetuation of the sport of wildfowling.

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